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ABSTRACT

The role of individual institutions and college-state agency cooperation in reducing program duplication is discussed. Declining enrollments and financial problems have necessitated determining what courses/programs will be offered at which institutions. At the freshman and sophomore level, states usually require that community colleges and lower-division branch campuses offer curricula articulated with those in the first 2 years of senior colleges and universities. In most states, curriculum proposals are initiated on campus (in a department, division, or college); the proposal then goes to a university coordinating office for review before being sent to a state-level approval body. Degree programs may be identified as appropriate (or inappropriate) for a given institution on the basis of that institution's mission, history, or special designation. Attempts to control program duplication are even more pronounced at the graduate level. Factors that work against state-level planning include: intrastate regionalism, institutional resistance to change, geographic dispersion of institutions, alumni and legislative political pressure, and faculty resistance. (SW)

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State-Level Agencies, the Curriculum, and Program Duplication

by Owen F. Cargol

For many years, program duplication has been a bugaboo in discussions of higher education in many states. Montana, for example, followed the national pattern during the growth era of the 1960s and saw a seemingly unchecked proliferation and duplication of programs. It was easy for us, in retrospect, to identify many instances where campuses were allowed to develop strength (and hence expectations) in fields from which they should have been restricted. During that period few campuses objected to each other's development of duplicate programs. It looked then as though there would always be sufficient enrollments to sustain all programs.

"Now we are faced with the prospect of declining full-time enrollments and increasing competition among colleges for students. Where 'duplication' was once the buzz word of critics external to the system, it is now seen within academia as the cause of enrollment declines on some campuses; its eradication is often seen as the salvation of declining programs." (Montana, 1979, p. 251.1-251.2)

The decline in political and financial support for higher education, combined with faltering enrollments, has forced many state-supported institutions to choose between selective and across-the-board budget cuts. Even for institutions receiving modest increases in appropriations, budget officers frequently must rob Peter to keep Paul solvent. For the first time in decades, educators, governing boards, and legislators are seriously considering reducing access in order to maintain quality and breadth of offerings.

Recent literature reflects the pressures facing state higher education agencies, college presidents, budget officers, and faculty to organize curricula through a central state office so as to reduce program duplication, insure at least one in-state program per subject area, promote quality, and still meet the needs of citizens of the state.

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An Era of Choices

The transformation of teachers colleges into multipurpose universities, the proliferation of branch campuses, the growth in community colleges, and the expansion of continuing education programs brought higher education to many thousands of Americans regardless of their economic status or geographic location. In most states, large, elborate—and expensive—systems of higher education have come into being. Now these systems are threatened by a constricted market for college graduates, by age-group decline, and especially by their supporting state's financial exigency. State authority and institutions both know that difficult choices will have to be made.

As described by Millett (1975), these choices include determination of what courses/programs will be offered at which institutions; the role of individual institutions in deciding which programs shall be kept or dropped; and the role of individual institutions in relation to state boards or coordinating commissions in making such decisions.

The quotation from the Montana Policy and Procedure Manual which introduced this article exemplifies attempts by governing boards to encourage cost-effective administration of state colleges and universities without unduly sacrificing educational opportunity or quality. Miner (1979) notes that "the inclination exists to control programs on input-output criteria by examination of the demand (not worth) of the program, and the expected placement of those completing the program" (p. 3). Public institutions are admonished to improve interinstitutional coop-

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eration and eliminate duplication of effort, or face having the state do it for them (Rabineau, 1978).

Cognizant of both institutional histories and the need to duplicate some programs at the undergraduate level (English and mathematics, for example), many states have moved to restrict each institution's control over what programs it shall offer (Mlye 1980; Berdahl, 1975). Regardless of the state or the needs of its various institutions, only a given amount of the public's resources will be allocated to postsecondary education under these circumstances. Miner (1979) suggests that "very often external intervention is a statement of public opinion about the value of education and about the direction education should be taking. . . . Time spent in interpreting external intervention as indicators of public expectation would be well spent" (p. 4). Callan (1980) suggests that higher education must deal not only with changing demographic realities, but also with ". . . the public's disillusion with government and the growing movement to restrict revenues and expenditures" (p. 27).

Lower-Division Programs

At the freshman and sophomore level, states usually require that community colleges and lower-division branch campuses offer curricula articulated with those in the first two years of senior colleges and universities (Bender, 1976). The Mississippi Junior College Commission (Mississippi, 1977) requires each institution to demonstrate that its programs have an effective relationship with corresponding programs in senior colleges and universities. In addition, Mississippi junior colleges must conform to a uniform course numbering system to enhance transferability and an awareness of the availability of similar programs at each campus (Mississippi, 1981-82).

The North Carolina State Board of Education for Community Colleges has gone a step further by establishing curriculum requirements in communications, the humanities, mathematics, science, social science, and physical education for the A.A., A.S., and A.F.A. degrees (North Carolina, 1981, p. 100). By establishing guidelines for meeting distribution requirements, the hope is to reverse trends toward a hodge-podge curriculum or excessive specialization in the lower division. General education had been forced out of many curricula in the previous decade. The revival of core curricula in the late 1970s reestablished the role of general education as provider of tools for an educated person, tools appropriate for every college student regardless of major. Levine (1981) suggests that prescribed distribution requirements are part of the curriculum at eighty-five percent of all colleges and are the most common form of general education requirements.

Eighteen states have either statutes or policies which require the state central agency for postsecondary education to review and approve (or disapprove) new and existing programs at public community colleges (Education Commission of the States, 1979). E.C.S. (1979) notes that another fourteen states allow only new program review and approval.

Undergraduate Programs

The Arizona Board of Regents requires its specific approval prior to: the implementation or disestablishment of any academic degree program; any transfer of an academic program between university units entailing significant budgetary or personnel changes; or any addition or deletion of any course to the curriculum (Arizona, 1977, p. 8). On the other hand, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education has approval authority only for *new* instructional programs at state colleges and universities; it can only "review and recommend" modification or termination of *existing* program (Alabama, 1976).

Alabama is one of fifteen states with a "review and recommend only" responsibility for existing programs (E.C.S., 1979). Thirty-one states give "review and *approval*" power over existing programs to their state boards or commissions either as statutory responsibility or as a matter of policy (E.C.S., 1979). In addition, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (Massachusetts, 1979) and the New York State Education Department (New York, 1980) both have standards for independent institutions regarding the development of curricula. E.C.S. (1979) identifies thirty-three states that give their central coordinating agency responsibility (through statute or policy) for planning and coordinating activities of private institutions.

In most states, curriculum proposals are initiated on campus (in a department, division, or college); the proposal then goes to a university coordinating office for review before being sent on to a state-level approval body (ECS, 1979). In New York, for example, a new-program proposal from a public institution must first be approved by the central coordinating office of SUNY or CUNY before being forwarded to the New York Education Department for further review and registration (approval). Approval by the SUNY or CUNY's central coordinating office is no guarantee of Education Department approval. Forty-six states give their state board or coordinating commission "review and approval" responsibility for proposed *new* programs (ECS, 1979).

Policies governing the review of existing programs and the approval of new programs for the Vermont State Colleges (Vermont, 1981, Exhibit I) require classification of programs as either distinctive, essential, general, to be discontinued, or under development.

As noted in the Vermont State Colleges *Manual of Policies and Procedures* (1981, Exhibit II), planning for a new program must proceed within a framework "which matches initiative with a realistic appraisal of the conditions which will shape choices. This means a careful, realistic evaluation of demand for services and the probable resources available to support those services on a long-term basis and at the level of quality which will be acceptable to both providers and users of such services. No institution or statewide educational system can serve or meet all demands for academic programs. Consequently, the focus of academic program planning must be on what can be done best for the greatest variety and number of students.

"It is not sufficient for a degree program to satisfy a single criterion within a set of criteria, e.g., student demand or employment opportunities. In order for the Vermont State Colleges to provide reasonable assurance that all degree programs make the best use of

resources and support the missions of the system and institutions, degree programs must be considered using criteria applicable to all" (p. 1-2).

T. K. Olson (1980), executive director of the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission, notes that his agency is increasingly ". . . looking at shared programs as a first criterion in program review. The burden of proof is on institutions to justify why they want to do it alone. Increasingly, we are asking the question of why we, as opposed to other states, should offer a particular program. And, why should we do it at all? Either let the private sector do it or, perhaps, find ways to approach it through technology to avoid having to enshrine it in an academic institution. We take a tough look at credentialing and the reasons for enrollment in all forms of programming, in order to see whether business, industry, or the government should foot the bill" (p. 23).

The Utah System of Higher Education (Utah, 1969) applies four criteria to determine whether to submit a new program to the Utah Board of Regents for approval. They are: institutional readiness to offer the program; demonstrated need for the program; the state's ability to finance it; the the previous role-assignments of the institution. Program modification is left to institutional discretion so long as it does not result in new degrees, roles, or missions.

Degree programs may be identified as appropriate (or inappropriate) for a given institution on the basis of that institution's mission, history, or special designation (Boren, 1978). California (1981) identifies programs it considers appropriate for different categories of institutions (land-grant, graduate-level, other four-year, etc.). Delineation of an appropriate institution for a given group of curricula does not assure quality; the intent is to prevent dilution of state funding among underfinanced duplicate program (Millard, 197). While access is reduced by placing restrictions on the availability of particular academic programs, chances improve for focusing limited funds on a state's unique programs. As Miner points out (1979, p. 5), "if a program cannot be justified by real need, real demand, and complete information on resource commitment, the program can become an indirect financial manager of other programs by reducing the resources available for distribution/allocation to existing programs."

In Florida, the state legislature used just such a rationale to eliminate funding for recreational courses, to establish curricular priorities that excluded many noncredit courses, and to initiate proviso language that bases state funding for job-training courses on the enrollment of students who have been or are currently employed in the occupation for which training is provided (Miner, 1979). Aside from reducing competition for limited resources, unique programs reduce institutional competition for qualified students.

Graduate-Level Programs

Because of its esoteric (and expensive) nature of graduate programs, attempts to control program duplication are even more pronounced at that level. Taking Texas as an example, the Coordinating Board for the Texas College and University System (Texas, 1981) posits criteria for approval of new graduate programs at the master's and doctoral level to insure that they will be institutionally appropriate (p. 8-12). The criteria used in considering new master's degree programs include role and scope of the institution, demonstrated competence at the baccalaureate level, faculty resources, critical mass of qualified students, unnecessary strictures, specific steps for implementation, administration of the program, existing programs, and library resources. Criteria used for approval of new doctoral programs in Texas are even more extensive. They include design of the program, freedom of inquiry and expression, strength of programs at the undergraduate and master's level, need for the program, faculty resources, teaching loads of faculty, critical mass of superior students, adequate financial assistance for doctoral students, carefully planned program of study, physical facilities, library resources, program evaluation standards, and specific standards for implementation.

Obstacles to State-Level Planning

The advantages of clearly identifying an institution's mission and the specific programs that help it fulfill that mission would seem to provide a welcome, appropriate role for a state governing board or postsecondary education commission. A number of factors, however, work against such a role. Intra-state regionalism, institutional resistance to change, geographic dispersion of institutions, alumni and legislative political pressure, and faculty resistance combine to reduce the ability of state bodies to coordinate curriculum planning.

Intra-state regionalism is a phenomenon that exists throughout the country, in small states with large populations, like Delaware and Massachusetts, and in large states with small populations, like Idaho and Alaska. Rivalry between regions of a state usually has historical roots based on social and economic differences—factors that played a role in the founding of the state's public institutions and the development of their curricula (Martorana, 1975, 1977). The expansion of curricular offerings in the 1960s and '70s added a dimensional quality to many colleges, new breadth not accomplished, in general, at the expense of the quality or development of existing curricula.

The retrenchment facing many institutions today has produced an institution-based mentality dictating that all programs must be held onto regardless of their quality or enrollment demand. This reluctance to reduce quantity in order to preserve the quality of remaining programs has heightened public suspicions that administrators and faculty are more concerned about saving their jobs and budgets than they are about preserving institutional quality and enhancing cooperation.

As Callan (1980) suggests, "we do not like the kinds of questions that people who review programs—even if our peers—tend to ask. The collegial mechanisms of an institution deal more confidently with issues of growth, where the primary concern is dividing up an ever-expanding pie each year" (p. 30). Chance (1980) and Moye (1980) suggest that state-level boards play a "black hat" role: they take the heat off institutional leaders by exerting outside pressure on administrators to arrive at decisions about program discontinu-

ance.

A frequently made argument against central coordination to reduce duplication is geographical. Western and Plains states such as Colorado and the Dakotas have significant population clusters hundreds of miles from state institutions offering the kinds of specialized programs desired by residents. The problem of distance and travel is made even more difficult by severe winters and mountainous terrain.

A most difficult obstacle to centralized program planning is alumni and legislative political pressure brought to bear on state boards, in governor's offices, and before legislative education and finance committees (Boozer, 1976; Bowen, 1979). Public-relations representatives and program chairs churn out statistical representations of the value of each program; they organize campus visits for influential alumni and local legislators. As a result, considerable pressure can be exerted on state governing bodies to refrain from ordering (or even recommending) program consolidation, relocation, or discontinuance.

Another obstacle to centralized control is the faculty, which tends to view its role in curriculum development as primary (Ziegler, 1976). Faculty also exhibit a reluctance to critize the appropriateness, worth, or quality of another faculty's programs. As Barak (1980) observes, institutional reviews tend to be designed to improve the quality of a program (these are formative in purpose), while state-level reviews are more concerned with program appropriateness and effectiveness (a summative purpose). Barak states that institutional reviews *may* be summative, and state-level reviews *may* be formative, but they are likely to be oriented the other way. Chance (1980), however, suggests that "in the review of both new and existing programs, state-level reviewers can play a complementary role with respect to institutional reviewers." (p. 93). He points out that while state-level review tends to focus on qualitative considerations—need for the program, program cost, and institutional role—there is often a great deal of quantitative information to support these assumptions. Davis and Dougherty (1978) identify six barriers to program closure: absence of a database from which to interpret criteria; time-consuming involvement of academic officers, deans, and faculty members; emotionalism and resulting decreased objectivity; faculty distrust due to a lack of consultation; ambivalence about making decisions; and political climate.

Resolving questions of central or state control over the curriculum is not easy. Each state must deal with its own history, institutional development, program pattern, and budget. As such, no one set of recommendations can apply to all states. As Barak suggests (1980), "it is important to find approaches geared to the environment and circumstances of an individual institution or state . . . what works well in one state may be a disaster in another" (p. 37). ■

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